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PALESTINE.

FROM BEYROUT TO BAALBEC.

A LECTURE DELIVERED BY REV. L. B. PLATT, AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, APRIL 23, 1882.

I do not know of any better prescription for that person who is laboring under the delusion that he is about perfect, than to subject himself to all the petty annoyances of tyranny and trickery which are the necessary accompaniments of travel in the East. And probably worst of all, as crowding into the smallest compass and time the greatest amount of and exasperating meanness, is a voyage in a Mediterranean Steamer.

In the first place you pay for your ticket from twice to four times as much as you would pay in this country for as greatly superior accommodations. For a trip of three days, for instance, from Naples to Athens the fare is $40.00 If you don't happen to know how much it is, being a foreigner, they are likely to charge you as much more as they think you will probably pay. The clerk makes out your ticket and when he hands back your change it is from 50 cents to a dollar short. You gently intimate that you would like the balance of it if convenient, and he quietly puts the money in his pocket and tells you with utmost self-composure that it is alright and not having sufficient knowledge of the language to raise a row about it with any chance of success, you have to tell him what you think of him in a few vigorous English phrases, hoping for the sake of peace that he wont understand it, and then walk off without your money.

You take your ticket and look around for the steamer. And now, like the man that gets married, your trouble begins. You will always find her—not at the wharf, where passengers might easily get aboard—but lying out about a quarter or half a mile from shore with no way to reach it except by procuring a boat at your own expense. And now you can have your choice, either you can stand and dicker and quarrel with the boatmen about the price before you start, or you can jump into his boat, tell him where you want to go, and have your fight with him after you get there. But at one end or the other of the transaction, you *must* have it. It's a part of the program, no matter how much you offer him. And usually the more generous you are, the more direful is the combat with him.

But now having arrived at the ship, where you might naturally flatter yourself that all your troubles were ended, you find on the contrary that what you have already gone through is only a peaceful and pleasant prelude to that which follows. In the first place a lean-looking, tatter demalion reaches after your satchel, carries it half the length of the boat and passes it to another. He carries it to the foot of the ladder and hands it to another. He carries it up three or four stairs and gives it to a fourth and he to a fifth and so on until the top and there the steward takes it and passes it to the waiter and the waiter to the cabin boy and then this whole procession of animated scarecrows stand in line and hold out their hands and expect you to fee them. And if there is any other way out of it than simply to do it, I confess that I was never able to discover it, I never had moral courage enough to refuse but one man and he was at the top of the ladder and when I got to him—I was bankrupt.

But now having weighed anchor and put out to sea and accomplished half your voyage comes the crowning imposition of all. The steward approaches you and inquires if you would like any dinner. There you are, mind you, about five hundred miles from shore, and the question put to you in the most matter of fact way, by the man who keeps all the provisions, whether you would have anything to eat. We said "that considering all the circumstances we should rather think we would."

"Very well," he says, "only you will have to pay extra for it,"

"How's that?"

The fellow drew from his pocket our tickets that we had given up and in the blank space where these magnanimous steamboats companies of the Mediterranean specify the number of meals allowed each passenger on the voyage the clerk had written four when he knew that at least we should require seven, and in case of delay from ten to twenty, to keep us alive to the journey's end, and there was nothing to do but pay for them. We thought it was because we were Americans that we had been victimized. But we were considerably comforted when we were informed by a young Tunisian that they served everybody in the same way. It's only their way of doing business. He told us we must be on the lookout next time and see that the full allowance of meals was placed on our ticket. And so we did. And this time they very generously allowed us meals enough to have made twice the journey, and charged us extra for them, Of course these are matters of little importance, and perhaps not worthy of mention, and I should not have spoken of them except to give you a fair idea of the business honor and honesty of these eastern people. You can easily imagine what must be the moral status and the business dealings of a people to whom the word of any Englishman or American is more valuable than their own sacred oaths. Who say, "We know that is true, because an American says it, and an American never lies."

It was a stormy morning in the latter part of October, that having sailed from Alexandretta, in the north of Syria, (where we first reached the coast after our visit to Marash), having passed by Tripoli, where we discharged some prisoners, among whom was a Greek Priest, arrested and condemned to a term of years imprisonment for having given shelter and food to Brigands, who probably demanded it at the muzzle of the pistol and the poor fellow could not do otherwise, we dropped anchor at daylight in the harbor of Beiront. High overhead and behind the city was the mountain range of Lebanon. The rain was pouring in torrents as we looked from the port hole of our stateroom and saw between us and the shore a fleet of perhaps 50 row-boats manned by Arabs and all headed toward us—but dancing on the waves and seeming to rest on their oars. Soon, at a given signal, every oar struck into the water, every wild Arab set up a yell. The boats jumped from the water and shot head foremost down through the waves filling the air wiih dashing spray. It was a race of half a mile, clashing oars and bumping boats, shouts of triumph and yells of rage, white rags and red rags fluttering in the wind, and all bearing down on our steamer. Before we could get our clothes on, there were three hotel runners and guides to Palestine in our stateroom and more outside that would have come in if there had been room. We made a bargain with one of them to keep the rest away, and in about an hour and a half we had landed, found our hotel, engaged our guide, or Dragoman, for Palestine, selected the horses, and arranged to start next morning. The matter of selecting the horses is one upon which I should dwell more particularly if I had not been brought up in the Puritan fashion to consider anything which might by any possibility occasion merriment and above all things provoke a smile as awfully unbefitting the Sabbath day. I have always tried to be very strenuous upon this point, because it seems to me one of the most essential conditions of salvation and constitutes the major part of what is by many considered to be the evidence of true religious character. In fact, I have known individuals who appeared to have no religious character independent of it, and who if you should smooth out their solemn countenances and cut off their pious twanging noses would be entirely destitute of any religious character or any hope of salvation whatever. And so I won't say anything about the horses only that they hung down their heads and dropped their tails and stared at you out of a blind eye and tried hard to raise one ear and couldn't—and withal looked very pious. And certainly if long faces are any conclusive evidence of piety then horses have the advantage of the rest of us mortals in the race after glory. But it happened as it sometimes does with human beings like ourselves, that upon more familiar acquaintance, we discovered that it wasn't so much piety that troubled one horse as it was a sore back and with another it was a spavin or the heaves or the glanders or some other physical distress and with still others we were made acquainted with the fact after we mounted them that what we had mistaken for apparent piety was only a clear case of possession of the devil in disguise. And usually it didn't take long to find it out. At length however we made a selection and were off bright and early on the way to Damascus. Our road led across the plain under the shade of the cypress and mulberry and poplar until we reached the foot of Lebanon. There as we looked up the steep sides of the mountain and saw only the bare strata of white limestone and the piled up terraces glistening in the sun we could easily understand why it should have been called Lebanon—or the "white mountain"—but we could not understand how it could have been said of that vast heap of rocks towering against the sky, "the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon." But as we ascended the mountain and looked down from the summit and saw no rocks but only the luxuriance of vegetation, olive groves, and mulberry and palm and rich vineyards, invisible from below, we began to realize the force of that expression and the marvelous fertility of a soil that should cause a mere handful of corn in the thin earth on the very top of the mountain to shake with such abundance of fruitage.

We passed on the way a troop of Turkish cavalary, and I have seen soldiers before, rebel prisoners who came from Gettysburg with stains of powder still fresh on their faces, haggared, emaciated with long marches and hard fighting, without hats or shoes, the best dressed man among them in a pair of calico pants—but such a company of sunken eyed, hollow cheeked, half-famished and utterly dispirited inhabitants of the graveyard I thought I had never seen before. It reminded one of that famous company which Jack Falstaff led to the wars when a mad fellow met him and accused him of unloading all the gibbets in England and pressing the dead bodies into the service, and yet we say, "fight like Turks." But perhaps they do—and they explain to us that the reason why they fight to valiantly, is the hope they have of being killed and getting out of this present world into a better one And it certainly looks very plausible. One would think they might, they couldn't do worse certainly. But so far as my own experience goes, and what I have heard of them, in the capacity of military escort among the robber infested mountain range of Taurus, they seem to be in no greater hurry to go to Heaven than many christians are, who believe in Heaven as a land of of rest and of eternal peace and joy, and yet thank God every day, that they are the spared monuments of his mercy, that while others have been suddenly cut off and gone down to the grave, they are still in the land of the living, and on praying ground, as if it was the narrowest and luckiest escape they ever had that they came very near going to Heaven, but were just saved by the great mercy of God. And yet some of the best and saintest christians I ever knew pray that prayer. I dont know why, I don't believe they mean it. And so this reported heroism of the Turkish soldier in immediate prospect of death and the Mohammedan paradise. It turns out when put into actual practice, very much as in the case of a Catholic Priest who harangued the Corlist soldiers in Spain before a battle. Said he, soldiers, "You are fighting in a Holy cause, therefore do battle courageously, knowing that if you die this day you will sup to-night in Paradise." They fought. They were beaten They were running from the field helter-skelter for dear life, and the Priest with them. One of the soldiers said, "How now father, what are you running for, I thought you said if we were killed we should sup in Paradise." "Yes, I know," he said, "but the fact is I never eat any supper, I am troubled with indigestion, I can't sleep if I do."

As the sun began to go down behind the mountain which separated us from the distant view of the broad-bosomed Mediterranean, we entered the Garden of Eden, or rather one of the gardens of Eden for there seem to have been several. This however is perhaps the most authentic of any. Lebanon on one side and Anti Lebanon on the other rising to the heighth of from 2,000 to 11,000 feet, the highest peak of Mt. Hermon, and between them a fertile, luxuriant valley, forming a gigantic cradle for the infancy of the human race. The tomb of Noah is there, and the tomb of Seth, one 120 feet long, and the other only 60, and they explain why Seth's is so short by the tradition that he was buried with his legs doubled under him, but Noah at full length. In other words they believe that "there were giants in those days." But now seriously, it is my opinion that this was the garden of Eden. I can't tell why—but neither can any other person who is positively certain that it is somewhere else. They want it to be there and I want it to be here and so I am inclined to think that this *was* the actual place. At any rate no place could have been better adapted for the purpose in every respect. There must have been a charm and fascination beyond description and which has not yet passed away in the soft, dreamy luxuriance of the valley—with the river flowing swiftly and musically through. The air quivering with the songs of birds and reeking with the loaded perfumes of flowers. And standing at the entrance of it like the angelic sentinel robed in glistening purity of snow—from which the sun glanced like the two-edge sword, that turned every way—and guarded the gate of this Paradise was old, majestic Mt. Hermon.

We lay down to sleep in the midst of this Garden of Eden, under the full glory of the same moon that shone on Adam, and the same stars that twinkled through the over hanging branches upon his bed of leaves. But that which impressed me most deeply as I walked out alone in the night, was the knowledge that somewhere on those lonely heights of the distant mountain that seemed to have no fellowship with the earth, but only with the awful silence above was the scene in the life of the Son of God of which it is simply but wonderingly said that "He was transfigured before them, and His face did shine as the Son and his raiment was white as the light."

Next morning we were off before sunrise, and on the way to the famous magnificent ruin of Baalbek.

But first we stopped on the way at the invitation of our Dragoman to visit with his relatives living on one of the foot-hills of Lebanon. It was an opportunity to learn something of the home-life of the higher class of Arab people, which I have always been glad that we improved.

The outside of their houses, even of the wealthiest of them are not at all inviting. Usually of one story, sometimes two, built of mud bricks, shaped like a dry-goods box. They care nothing for outside appearances, stone steps, and verandas, and French roofs and cupolas, as we do. The whole expense of ornamentation is upon the inside, divans of silk and satin, Perisan rugs, silver trays, laces and jewels, gaudy colors, rich and barbaric finery with more display than taste, according to our notions, but eminently suited to their tastes and habits of life. They ushered us up a flight of stairs on the outside into the second story, which seemed to be the parlor. We took our seats on the silk cushions of the divan, and one after another the family made their appearance. The old mother in her neat silk gown, with a kind intelligent face and a cordial smile of welcome. "Halak Sa id." She said, how do you do? Then came the daughter, blushing behind her, gorgeous in silk and jewels, massive and sparkling rings on her hand, huge pendants of pearl in her ears. She said also softly and with graceful dignity "Halak Sa-id?" and we said, "pretty well thank you, how do you do?" Then came the father, and the son, and one by one the neighbors came, and last the Turkish governor of the village, hearing that two distinguished Americans were being entertained come also. And so we were lionized, our host was considerably set up by so great a distinction, and they all seemed to be happy.

First they set before us on the floor the famous Nargileh, the Turkish pipe, which when you try to smoke it, not only makes a chimney of your nose, but rushes out like a house afire from ears and eyes and every pore of the body. We said, "No, thank you!"

Next they brought in a small table and began to set it. First the table-cloth is spread on the floor, then the table turned upside down on the cloth, and then a tray placed on the four legs, that is the usual manner, but this time for some reason they left the table standing properly on its legs, rested a silver tray upon it, placed it in front of us, and told us to help ourselves. There was coffee, various kinds of pastry made from the sugar of the grape, figs and nuts. We ate and the rest of the roomful of company sat and watched us, and talked about us and smiled and laughed and seemed to think it was the biggest kind of a show.

They asked what country we came from. We told them America. One man said, "Your governor has been killed lately, what was his name?"

"Garfield."

"Did he leave a son to take his place?"

And then of course we had to explain to them the system of republican government—that Garfield was not a king, nor the son of a king but a common citizen, that he was chosen by the votes of the whole people to serve as chief ruler for four years, and then to retire and become once more an ordinary citizen and be succeeded by another. They listened like children to a romance of fairy-land. Never heard anything like that before.

"What do you mean by voting," they asked.

"Well," said I, "suppose that all of us here together in this room should want to choose someone of our number to be chief. Now I might want this man, and somebody else might want that man, but we all agree to take each of us a slip of paper and write on it the name of the man chosen, then we collect the papers, and the man whose name is written on the greatest number is elected, and becomes chief. Yet with such a simple explanation as that, which I had to repeat in all the languages and scraps of language I could muster for the occasion, the idea was so novel and startling as to be utterly beyond comprehension—couldn't understand it.

We visited two or three houses with them and as we rose to go one of the Arabs, by way of compliment said, "If you had been Englishman, you never would have come into the houre of an Arab in this friendly way.

(Continued on Seventh page.)